

## Department of Defense Press Briefing by Colonel Dillon via teleconference from Baghdad, Iraq

### Press Operations

Colonel Ryan Dillon, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve Spokesman; Major Adrian Rankine-Galloway, Pentagon Spokesman  
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MAJOR ADRIAN RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Good afternoon, everyone.

Today, we're joined by Colonel Ryan Dillon. Colonel Dillon is the spokesman for Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve. He is located in Baghdad, Iraq.

Before we get started, Colonel Dillon, how do you hear us, sir?

COLONEL RYAN DILLON: Adrian, I hear you very well. How me?

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: We hear you great, sir. The floor is yours, sir. Please take it away.

COL. DILLON: All right. Fantastic. Thanks, Adrian.

Good morning, everybody.

Today, we'll start in Iraq and then we'll move to Syria.

The past week, our Iraqi security force partners have continued pressing the fight against ISIS on multiple fronts, showing their capacity as a strong, united fighting force. In the two-and-a-half weeks since launching simultaneous operations in Hawija, Sharqat and West Anbar, the ISF has made steady progress defeating ISIS while it is liberating Iraqi citizens.

The Iraqi security forces quickly completed phase one of operations in Hawija and Sharqat, clearing more than 1,300 square kilometers and liberating more than 100 villages. The ISF are conducting security patrols, back clearance operations, and consolidation as part of the continued offensive. For operations in western Anbar province, the town of Ana is already clear of ISIS fighters and IEDs. And operations to back-clear nearby Rayhanna are underway.

As Iraqi security forces move towards Rawah, ISIS has established roving patrols to prevent the estimated 65,000 civilians there from leaving. As we have seen too often, ISIS captures and executes those who attempt to flee, evidence of the enemy's deliberate efforts to endanger and trap civilians.

The Kurdish independence referendum occurred this week. And while there's been much coverage of this event, the coalition and the ISF have stayed focused on operations to defeat ISIS. Coalition operations out of Erbil, specifically the use of the airport there, have not been affected.

Our Iraqi partners have fought a long, bloody war and have sacrificed a great deal to liberate their people and clear terrorists from cities and villages. More than 42,000 square kilometers have been cleared and more than 4 million people are now free from ISIS control.

ISIS is on the run, and we must remain focused on delivering a decisive defeat in their few remaining holdouts in Iraq. While doing that, we must also ensure our partners have the training, equipment and support to finish ISIS' defeat and prevent their return.

Yesterday, ISIS militants conducted three attacks near Ramadi in an apparent attempt to distract Iraqi security forces' attention from their successful operations in Hawija and Sharqat. The Anbar police responded quickly and heroically. Their ability to defeat ISIS and restore security is evidence of the significant gains in performance and capability among the ISF over the past three years. The Iraqis have the momentum, and there's no doubt about that.

In Syria, our partners, the Syrian Democratic Forces, have made clear progress, and we are seeing the terrorist group begin to lose its grip on their self-declared capital in Raqqa. More than 75 percent of the city is now clear of ISIS, with more than 50 city blocks cleared in the past week. ISIS is trying to control the remaining civilians in the city, holding them hostage as terrorists cling to the final square kilometers they hold.

Despite these attempts, the SDF provided safe passage for about 300 civilians seeking refuge from Raqqa this week. The SDF, the Raqqa Civil Council, and Iraqi internal security force are all working together to screen, move and provide food and supplies to those in need.

They are also attempting to warn of the IED and mine threat throughout the city. Unfortunately, two families triggered booby-traps this week while returning to their homes after their neighborhoods were cleared of ISIS. Incidents such as these remind us of the treacherous and inhumane tactics ISIS has used, and we call on the world to hold ISIS accountable for the thousands of innocent civilians that have been lost as a result of their inhumane actions and violations of the laws of war.

As the SDF moves through the city eliminating ISIS remnants, more than 1,600 trained Raqqa internal security force members stand ready to ensure security after Raqqa is rid of ISIS. In Deir ez-Zor province, the SDF continued deliberate movement towards the Syria-Iraq border and have reached the town of Al-Suwar, liberating more than 1,000 square kilometers along the way.

The flow of displaced civilians traveling north and west fluctuates from 500 to over 2,000 per day as the fighting in the province intensifies. The SDF prioritizes IDP safe passage to camps in Ar-Rashi, Mabrouka and as far away as Ayn Issa.

Checkpoints along main travel ways ensure roads are clear from common criminals, as well as ISIS fighters attempting to harm or infiltrate these group of evacuees.

On Monday, Russian-backed Syrian regime forces conducted artillery strike in the vicinity of SDF fighting position northeast of Deir ez-Zor. The SDF immediately reported the impacts in their area, and later announced casualties.

Coalition officials immediately passed SDF and impact locations to the Russians through the de-confliction line, with the intent to inform Syrian regime forces of impacts on or near SDF positions.

The coalition and its partners remain committed to the defeat of ISIS, and we will continue to use the de-confliction line as a means to prevent accidental targeting and to ease tensions.

The coalition is committed to our SDF partners in their operations against ISIS in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor province, and we retain the right of self-defense at all times.

It is important to remember, the singular mission of our Combined Joint Task Force is the annihilation of ISIS. And, in total, across Syria, about 2 million people are no longer under ISIS control, and more than 44,000 square kilometers have been cleared.

In a Pentagon press briefing early this month, I announced the coalition's successful strikes on high-value individuals, all tied to ISIS' unmanned aerial surveillance network. Today, we'll add three more to that list: Abu Mawad Al-Tunisi and Sajid Farooq Babar were killed in succession, September 12th and 13th, respectively, by coalition airstrikes conducted near Mayadin, Syria.

Abu Mawad and Sajid were responsible for manufacturing and modifying commercially produced drones. These strikes were followed by two other airstrikes on September 14th against Abu Salman, an ISIS drone developer, along with his research lab, located in Asharah, near Mayadin.

Abu Salman was killed while traveling with a terrorist associate in a vehicle from Mayadin to Al Asharah. His death and the destruction of his drone facility will disrupt ISIS' development of weaponized drones, as well as testing new software.

The removal of these three highly skilled ISIS officials disrupts and degrades ISIS ability to modify and employ drone platforms as reconnaissance and direct-fire weapons on the battlefield.

ISIS is losing on all fronts, and they are losing their grip on their few remaining strongholds in both Iraq and Syria. But, make no mistake, we fully expect fierce fighting in the days ahead. And while these terrorists remain a dangerous and desperate enemy, our ISF and SDF partners have proven they're up to the task.

This week, our coalition mourned the loss of one of our own, a master sergeant from the French army's 13th Dragoons Parachute Regiment was killed during combat operations in support of our fight against ISIS.

We stand in solidarity with our French partners and extend our thoughts to his family, friends and his comrades of the 13th. We will honor and remember his sacrifice, made in the name of freedom and our shared values.

And with that, I'll now take your questions.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Bob Burns, Associated Press.

Q: Thank you.

Colonel, regarding the Kurdish referendum, you said that, so far, use of the airport has not been affected. Are you certain that it will not be affected in the days ahead? If I understand correctly, the ban that was declared as -- takes effect tomorrow.

Have you been given any assurances that it won't be affected? And can you speak a little more broadly about the impact of the referendum on the counter-ISIS campaign, given the political

tensions that are escalating?

COL. DILLON: Sure thing. Yes, sir.

So you're absolutely correct. So right now, there's absolutely no effect on current military operations out of Erbil using the airport. And we remain in contact with both elements from the Kurdistan Regional Government, and also with Iraqi -- government of Iraq and Iraqi security forces. So I don't want to predict anything on the future, but right now current operations continue and we continue to go after ISIS.

Now, as far as, you know, effects and what has happened as a part of the referendum in the current fight against ISIS, we have obviously continued to push on with what is going on in Hawija and Sharqat and in western Anbar, and that has not been affected.

However, I will say that prior to the referendum, there were no questions about where the focus was from the Iraqi security forces. What I'll say now is that there are a lot of posturing and a lot of things that have been said about what, you know, could or may happen. And as military planners, we know that we are always trying to stay a couple steps ahead of our boss. So, what I will say is that the focus, which used to be like a laser beam on ISIS, is now not 100 percent there. So, there has been an effect on overall mission to defeat ISIS in Iraq as a result of the referendum.

I hope that answers your question, sir.

Q: Okay. Could I have just a quick follow up?

On your last point there about the 100 percent focus is something less than 100 percent now, can you elaborate a bit on what the impact -- implications are of that in practical terms?

COL. DILLON: I cannot. Right now, I can't. I can, you know, clearly tell you that, you know, that there are, you know, plenty of things that are -- have been said, and things that are -- that are drawing attention away from, you know, defeating ISIS. And I think there's plenty of it that is out there to talk about, i.e. forces going into particular locations.

But again, you know, the focus is not on ISIS as it once was prior to the referendum.

Q: Thank you.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Over to Ryan Browne, CNN.

Q: Colonel, thanks for doing this.

Just right now, we're hearing reports of new audio being released purporting to be ISIS leader al-Baghdadi. Are you aware of this audio release? Is the military -- is the coalition analyzing it to determine its authenticity?

COL. DILLON: All right, Ryan. It just came out. I was not aware of it. And so as of this morning from when I left to come over here, or later on in the afternoon, this is the first I've heard about it.

Q: Sir, and just to go back on something you said about the incident on Monday with the Syrian

Democratic Forces reported coming under artillery fire from regime Russian-backed forces. Were there any coalition advisers present with those SDF units that received that artillery fire from the regime troops?

COL. DILLON: Ryan, I am not aware of any coalition, you know, forces that were nearby when those strikes happened.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Over to Carla Babb, Voice of America.

Q: Hi, Colonel. Thanks as always for doing this.

Going back to Raqqa really quickly, more than 75 percent is cleared. How many ISIS fighters do you estimate are still in the city?

COL. DILLON: All right, Carla. The -- I know that we had estimated between 400 and 800 ISIS fighters remain in Raqqa. And we're talking about a -- about a four square kilometer area that remains in the city. The ISIS fighters still hold the stadium and are still holding the national hospital compound that they've turned into their headquarters and logistics location.

But that is isolated. Those are the -- the remaining areas where the focus needs to be. And the Syrian Democratic Forces are continuing to push and make progress every single day. There was quite a bit -- quite a bit of progress that was made this last week as far as clearing these blocks, but there's no question about it -- the remaining areas are multi-story-level buildings, and we expect also that the majority of the fighters that remain are foreign fighters and hard-core fighters that will fight to the death.

Q: And one follow-up. Because you had mentioned that they're using civilians as hostages, what type of measures are the coalition using currently to ensure that the civilians will not get targeted as operations intensify for that last 25 percent of Raqqa?

COL. DILLON: Yes, Carla. The thing is -- is that, just as we do with any of our strikes and any of our targeting, we will always take into account civilians and noncombatants. We know the tactics that ISIS has used because we've seen it already. We've seen it in Mosul. And, you know, some of the things that they do with traveling with groups of civilians to prevent from being struck, and then also the tactics of gathering and herding people into buildings, welding doors shut.

So we are mindful of that. We're keeping an eye on this prior to making strikes. These are also -- this is the final remaining area. There's a difference between deliberate strikes and dynamic strikes. So, our ability to deliberately watch and look at a smaller area helps us recognize and know where those targets are. And when we can hit them with the right amount of precision and the right type of munition to minimize any other damage in and around the target that we want to hit, legitimate military targets.

Q: And I have one last follow-up, while I'm thinking about it.

Back in March, there was an airstrike in Raqqa that was contested. Human Rights Watch has said that it was a school and civilians were killed. I believe you guys had determined that there were not civilians; that that was a building that was being used by ISIS. Human Rights Watch went in in July and did some more investigations.

Just to confirm, you guys still stand by no civilians were killed in that attack, correct?

COL. DILLON: That is correct. And if it's from the most recent report that came out, that was outside of Raqqa, and I believe it was a place called Mansoura. We did conclude, and through our investigations that, on -- I think it was the July 7th civilian casualty report -- you know, it was -- we determined that there were no civilians present at the time of the strike, as we conducted our investigation.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Now, to Kasim Ileri with Anadolu.

Q: Hi, Colonel. Thanks for doing this.

My question will be about Hawija. When do you think Hawija city is going to be liberated? And is Peshmerga now taking part in support of the fight for Hawija?

COL. DILLON: Okay, Kasim. So, first off, as I mentioned, the first phase of operations for Hawija and Sharqat went very, very quickly. The first phase, which the Iraqi Security Forces predicted would take a week, was complete within the first 72 hours. So they moved very quickly on that.

That's not to say that -- the fighting in the future is not going to be easy. We fully expect it to be difficult. I'm not going to set a timeline, just as with any of our operations on what we are doing to clear ISIS. You know, we have clearly seen that the Iraqi Security Forces, as we've seen in Tal Afar and in these other locations -- Aqashat, Anna, Rayhanna -- those have gone very, very well, and we certainly want to keep up that trend, and -- and move in that direction. But I'm not going to set a timeline on Hawija.

And as far as the Peshmerga and their role in Hawija, they are not playing a direct role, meaning they are not on one of the axes of advance that is attacking into Hawija. But just like we've seen in Tal Afar, they did not play a role in the attacking force. However, they did play a role -- a vital role in stopping ISIS that were trying to attempt to flee north from Tal Afar, and they killed several hundred and captured several hundred ISIS fighters as a result.

And because of where Hawija is in relation to the Kurdistan defensive line, we see them playing a very similar part in the Hawija operation that they did in Tal Afar.

Q: Also, there -- there are some claims that ISIS has been asking ISF to allow them to leave Hawija, and then to move to Deir ez-Zor. Is there any kind of information like this coming to -- come to you?

COL. DILLON: Okay, Kasim, I have not heard of that. I know what the -- what the prime minister has said and -- about unconditional surrender. They will either surrender, or they will die. And so, that is the words that I have heard from the commander in chief, and I have not heard anything other than that.

Q: Very quick, follow-up; sorry.

And there -- there is -- there is some reports that some Russian officers have been abducted by ISIS inside Syria. Is there any kind of cooperation or any kind of support that you extended to Russians to find their officers inside Syria?

COL. DILLON: Kasim, no.

Our interaction with the Russians is purely, you know, through the de-confliction line, and that -- you know, we've talked quite a bit about that, to make sure that we can continue our operations against ISIS.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Laurie Mylroie from Kurdistan 24.

Q: Thank -- thank, Colonel, for -- for this.

Just -- just to be clear about Kasim's questions, last week you described ongoing coordination between the Iraqi army and the Peshmerga regarding Hawija. That coordination still continues?

COL. DILLON: As far as I know, that does continue.

And there was talk about movement of Iraqi Security Forces between the -- the Kurdistan defensive line, so that they can maneuver and get into positions in order to attack Hawija. And as far as I know, those coordinations and that continues.

Q: And another question. You described the problem that the referendum has created with a lack of focus on ISIS. It's a lack of focus on the Iraqi side? And it seems like the Iraqi parliament calling for the Iraqi forces to take Kirkuk and its oil fields now. Is that the kind of thing you mean?

COL. DILLON: I'm talking across the board. So I'm talking from -- from Iraqi Security Forces. I'm talking from, you know, Peshmerga. I'm talking about, you know, ourselves, you know, as well, and the planning efforts that -- that we have to look into in -- in playing out the what-ifs.

I know we don't -- I don't talk about the what-ifs, but we have planners that try to predict and -- and plan for potential, you know, potentials. And so that's where, you know, some of our efforts and our brainpower has gone towards -- after the referendum has kicked off.

Q: My final question. On Tuesday, General Dunford in Senate testimony gave a suggestion that in six months, ISIS would essentially have lost all meaningful territory in Iraq and Syria. Would you agree with that estimate of about six months?

COL. DILLON: I would agree that we are moving along very well. I mean, you've got the last two holdouts in Iraq that are about to be taken. And you're at 75 percent in Raqqa, and there still does remain some work in the Middle Euphrates River Valley.

But really, essentially once Raqqa is complete in Syria, you know, to say, you know, they are completely, you know, hampered, I don't know about that. What I would say is that, you know, the -- the battlefield and the military successes in Iraq and Syria are necessary, but that doesn't mean the end of ISIS.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next to Joe Tabet from Al Hurra.

Q: Colonel Dillon, I want to go back to the KRG referendum. Could you tell us if coalition leaders have had any communications with the KRG about the referendum, about its timing? Could you tell us if the coalition feels disappointed about this referendum? And what

kind of implications do you see in the next few days between Erbil and Baghdad?

COL. DILLON: Okay, Joe. So, going to the first question, you know, when we talk about coalition, clearly there's been, you know, Special Presidential Envoy McGurk as the global coalition. He has certainly played a part in dissuading the Kurdistan Regional Government from holding the referendum.

As far as the coalition, when you're talking about, you know, those that wear this patch on our left shoulder, you know, this is -- this is a political issue and we're focused on the military efforts to defeat ISIS. And as far as I know, there have been no -- any kind of conversations from military folks trying to, you know, talk about the referendum.

And I think you had another question.

Q: Let me -- yeah, let me put this question this way. As coalition -- as U.S. military on the ground, would you -- would you ask Erbil to cooperate with Baghdad?

COL. DILLON: No -- (inaudible) -- role, Joe. So that would not be on us to do that.

Q: Okay. Let me switch to Syria. Could you give us an update about the de-confliction lines with the Russians? How much are they working right now? And what about Deir ez-Zor? We have seen multiple attacks from the Syrian regime on SDF. Could you give us an update what's going on on the ground? How much the Syrian regime is advancing in -- in that area?

COL. DILLON: Okay. So I'll parcel these. So the first thing about the de-confliction and now often that is. I talked last week about the face-to-face meeting. You know, that happened. There has not been another face-to-face meeting that I'm aware of.

I know that de-confliction happens multiple times during the day. So I've mentioned before, you have the lines between the ground elements, and then you have a phone line between the air components and the air elements, both Russian and with the coalition side. You know, they talk on those lines multiple times a day.

And, you know, as far as the attacks that have happened or the impacts that have landed nearby SDF troops, that happened on the 16th of September and on the 25th of September. And in both cases, you know, we immediately informed the Russians and attempted to de-conflict. And so we will continue to do that so that we can continue to focus on our mission on defeating ISIS.

As far as where the Syrians are and the regime is, they are still maneuvering to take, you know, to try to move on ISIS in Deir ez-Zor city, but there are elements that are on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River. And we've maintained a distance with the SDF and with the regime elements on that eastern side, and that's why these de-confliction measures are -- are so important so that we can stay focused on our mission.

Q: Thank you.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Sylvie Lanteaume from Agence France-Presse.

Q: Hello, Colonel.

I would like to go back to the Erbil airport. You said that you don't want to predict anything at the moment. So, you -- I suppose there are some negotiations right now. If the coalition planes cannot use this airport, what is the plan B?

COL. DILLON: Well, it hasn't happened and I don't want to go to a plan B until it does. So right now, military operations and operations out of Erbil airport continue and elsewhere throughout -- and other places in Iraq. So I'm not going to, you know, make any kind of predictions to say what will the plan B be.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next to Corey Dickstein from Stars and Stripes.

Q: Hey, Colonel Dillon.

On the -- or I'm sorry -- the shelling on Monday from the Syrian troops towards the SDF, you said you guys, you know, used the de-confliction measures immediately. Did the shelling stop quickly? Would you say that the de-confliction worked properly? And do you guys assess that it was an accidental targeting of them? Or did they intentionally strike the SDF?

COL. DILLON: Okay. So Corey, the indirect fire happened and it stopped and it was immediately, you know, reported the points of impact. And then there was no indirect fire that happened as a -- after that.

Whether or not to say that they were purposely, you know, aiming at that, we don't know and can't tell that. But that's why we have the de-confliction line in place, you know, so that we can, you know, prevent these things from happening. And, you know, prevent -- try to prevent them from happening again in the future.

Q: And then on a totally different topic. These three high-value targets that you guys hit that were involved in the drone reconstructing, manufacturing, what have you. Do you guys have any idea on where they learned their skills on, you know, turning these drones into, you know, kind of, weapons? Are they -- are these foreign guys that have come in from Europe or somewhere else?

COL. DILLON: Corey, I'm not sure where they learned how to do it. I know that we found out, you know, who was doing it, and we've been able to dismantle and, you know, really pull apart this entire network. And -- you know, so they're not doing it anymore, that's for sure.

But I -- you know, to answer your question, I don't know where they learned these skills. But I know that they can't teach them anymore, and we know that they cannot, you know, use these skills anymore in Iraq, Syria, and then push it out to others globally.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Elizabeth McLaughlin from ABC.

Q: Hi, Colonel Dillon.

Since we last talked Thursday, has there been any additional meetings between Russians and the U.S. in face-to-face in Syria?

COL. DILLON: There have not.

Q: And then, going back to the Baghdadi audio, there -- in the translations that are coming out,

there are indications that this is a -- a recent audio -- references to Raqqa, Mosul, North Korea. Can you give us a sense, has there been any change in the assessment of where -- his whereabouts may be; assessment of whether he's alive or dead? I know we -- we talk about this quite a bit. But can you give us your latest sense for what the coalition sees?

COL. DILLON: Yeah, Elizabeth, I know that we have always -- without verifiable evidence of his death, we have continued to assume that he is alive. And I know that we have professionals that are out there in our organization that are specifically looking for Baghdadi and, you know, people like him, you know.

And clearly, today, with the -- the HVIs that I've mentioned, and the, you know, going to probably the 50 or 60 that I've mentioned since I've been here, you know, we are good at -- at what we do, as far as going after and dismantling these networks, and going after these high-value targets.

Again, you know, even when General Townsend was here, prior to his departure, we don't -- we don't -- we did not know where Baghdadi is.

I'm sure that, you know, our professionals are looking at this audio just as quickly and as thoroughly as you guys are. So if there is any evidence to point to, or say where he is, you know, we may have folks moving in right now.

Q: Thank you.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next to Kevin Barron.

Q: Hi, Colonel.

I came in late, so apologies if this is repetitive. But on the -- on the Kurdish reaction, I wonder if you could describe kind -- any kind of mood or communication you're hearing from Peshmerga up in Erbil, such as the ones who've been training with Americans for the last couple years for that ISIS fight. I know there was never any kind of expectation on the future, but certainly, among those fighters, there was a -- there was an assumption there would be at least a referendum, and America that would be -- would be backing them.

So, I mean, are you hearing words of -- of betrayal, of -- of questioning? And I know it's -- not at the political level, but I mean, commander to commander, with the partners you -- you've had shoulder to shoulder out there.

COL. DILLON: Hey, Kevin.

I -- I don't know that, and that's a good question. I have not talked to, you know, our -- our comrades who are, you know, working with them up in -- and in Erbil. But I have not heard any reflections, negatively or otherwise, you know, from -- from what has happened. So I just don't know that answer for you. I apologize.

Q: All right.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Ryan Browne, CNN.

Q: Colonel, just a quick follow-up.

Last week the Russian Ministry of Defense released what it said was images -- satellite surveillance images, of what it said were U.S., coalition and SDF positions in Syria. Now, whether or not these images -- If the images are accurate -- real, is this kind of in the spirit of de-confliction? Does this not provide ISIS with kind of intelligence on SDF and coalition movements? And was that publication protested via the de-confliction line?

COL. DILLON: Okay, so, Ryan, you know, the -- we saw the -- the same pictures, and what I'll just say is that, you know, the de-confliction that is happening, you know, with our counterparts here in Syria and on the ground continues, and it goes well.

You know, some of the things that have been, you know, coming out of the MOD are not exactly in line with the efforts that are going towards de-confliction here.

So, what I'll say is, you know, we're going to continue to work through the de-confliction just as we did in May when -- when tensions ran high. And we'll continue to work it. You know, we are always available on the other end of our de-confliction line, 24/7.

Q: Just to follow up, though, if the Russians were to publish images of coalition positions, isn't that -- doesn't that pose a serious risk to U.S. and other coalition forces?

COL. DILLON: Well, if they were accurate, you know, perhaps. But what I'll do is, you know, if there is -- if it does pose a risk, that will be something that would go direct with -- with Russia, the MOD, probably from OSD. And we would like have, if they were accurate, we'd likely have those same discussions on the de-confliction level between General Funk and his counterpart as well. But those -- those at our level have no -- we have not had to come to those discussions.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Idrees Ali, Reuters.

Q: Hey, Colonel, just to follow up to Bob Burns' question.

Obviously, the Kurdish referendum, like you said, did have impact on the focus in the fight against Islamic state. Is there anything beyond the loss of focus that's been impacted by the referendum?

COL. DILLON: Not that I know of, Idrees, not at the coalition level. I can't, you know, speak for any levels higher, whether it's, you know, from the embassy or elsewhere, but at the coalition level, no.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: All right. I think we're at the end of our queue. Are there any more questions for Colonel Dillon?

All right. Thank you very much, sir. Are there any closing words for the group?

COL. DILLON: No. Thank you very much.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Thank you very much. Have a good day.